

The Legal And Managerial Framework Of Green Human Resource Practices In Environmentally Responsible Enterprises

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Abstract

In response to the growing environmental challenges facing modern enterprises, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has emerged as a strategic tool to embed sustainability into organizational culture. Despite increased awareness, the integration of legal frameworks with managerial strategies in Green HRM remains underexplored. The study investigates how environmentally responsible enterprises align legal compliance with managerial innovation to implement sustainable HR practices. Using a qualitative, exploratory research design, data were collected through 38 semi-structured interviews and document analysis across 15 enterprises from diverse sectors, including manufacturing, logistics, construction, tourism, and IT services. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key patterns, practices, and challenges associated with Green HRM integration. Findings revealed that legal compliance integration, managerial engagement, and sustainability training were among the most frequently institutionalized practices. Areas such as environmental performance appraisal, employee reward systems, and the use of green KPIs remained inconsistently applied. Key barriers included legal ambiguity, budget constraints, limited expertise, and resistance to change, underscoring the need for organizational readiness and clearer policy translation. The study concludes that the successful adoption of Green HRM depends on the synergy between regulatory clarity and strategic leadership. Cross-functional collaboration and performance-linked incentives are vital for advancing environmental responsibility through HR systems. The research contributes to theory by framing a dual-dimensional model and offers practical insights for policy-makers and organizational leaders.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, legal compliance, sustainability leadership, performance appraisal, environmental regulation, strategic HRM

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the necessity to combat environmental degradation and climate change has triggered a paradigm shift in the strategic orientation of businesses in the global arena. The transformation not only relates to the traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) but also incorporates environmentally sustainable practices that are integrated into all organizational functions, including human resource management (HRM) (Pham et al., 2020). Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) has been found to be a strategic instrument in this light; it has become a way of incorporating environmental sustainability with the HR practices of recruiting, training, performance management, and employee engagement (Ren et al., 2018; Xie & Lau, 2023). Green HRM practices also aim to align the organizational goals in line with the environmental goals, and the workforce that is not only environmentally aware but also participates actively in the corporate sustainability efforts (Bangura et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the legal environment is shifting to support environmental responsibility with national and international laws, including ISO 14001 standards and such frameworks as the United Nations Protect, Respect and Remedy principles (ISO, 2015; Pitts, 2016). These changes have severe consequences on the human resource policies and practices as they challenge organizations to formulate legally sound and ethically motivated environmental policies. Businesses are also being forced to be environmentally responsible, not just to comply with regulations but also to appeal to the expectations of consumers, strengthen their brand image, and become more competitive in the long run (Shahzad et al., 2025; Ejibe et al., 2024). With the changing legal requirements and societal demands, HR managers can be at the centre stage of developing sustainable policies and creating a green organizational culture (Shaikh et al., 2024; Khan & Faisal, 2023). It is in this nexus between the legal requirement and managerial creativity that a comprehensive structure is needed that will allow businesses to make environmental compliance part of the HRM. The current research

usually addresses the legal and managerial aspects of Green HRM separately, not taking into consideration the synergistic possibilities of their collaboration (Zhang & Han, 2025; Wiyono et al., 2025). The research aims at examining an integrative approach that interconnects legal adherence and management operations to facilitate the achievement of effective green HR practices within environmentally sustainable business organizations.

Although the importance of Green HRM in promoting sustainability has been well recognized, there is still a gap that needs to be filled in the knowledge about the joint impact of legal and management systems on the implementation of the practice. The green HR initiatives pursued by many organizations are implemented in a fragmented fashion and are not embedded in a cohesive strategy with the legal and institutional support (Awwad Al-Shammari et al., 2022; Alzyoud, 2021). There is no uniform model of incorporating green legal compliance into HR practices, which causes discrepancies in the practice and the overall level of environmental performance (Freihat et al., 2024). The other issue is the lack of attention to contextual dynamics, including the national legal framework, industry regulation, and the organizational culture, which are vital in the assessment of the effectiveness of Green HRM (Faeni et al., 2025). Although certain business organizations in developed economies might enjoy effective legal provisions and environmental solutions, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies do not possess the regulatory framework and management capabilities to adopt sustainable HRM policies (Obeng et al., 2024; Hba et al., 2016).

Environmental management does not only require legal compliance. It has to be supplemented by strategic HR practices contributing to the development of employee engagement, innovation, and organizational commitment to sustainability (Mandip, 2012; Saeed et al., 2021). Unless organizations have a cohesive structure that incorporates legal requirements with strategic human resource actions, organizations will not achieve their environmental objectives. The study responds to the necessity of a model that is structured and integrative and incorporates both legal mechanisms of compliance and managerial approaches to Green HRM, which will contribute to the improvement of regulatory compliance, as well as the sustainability of the organization.

The research is based mainly on the legal and managerial aspects of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) in environmentally responsible businesses in order to analyse the dynamics between the two aspects in order to develop sustainable HR practices. The study will include the examination of international legal norms, business environmental policies, and human resource innovations that can all facilitate ecological objectives. The study combines the global peer-reviewed research articles and global case studies by relying on existing literature and conceptual frameworks to present a comprehensive theoretical base. The study has a number of limitations in spite of its comprehensive nature. First, it has a geographical limitation because the study focuses on legal and managerial practices, which are supposed to be applicable in all parts of the world, but might not reflect the localized legal context or cultural differences in Green HRM practices in various parts of the world. Second, the sectoral orientation of the study is more on those industrial sectors where there are evident environmental externalities, like manufacturing, energy, and tourism, where the practice of Green HRM is more evident and can be quantified (Zahrani, 2024; Obeng et al., 2024). Consequently, the results cannot be directly transferred to industries where the environmental effect is less obvious or measurable. Third, the study is conceptual and theoretical, where secondary research is primarily based on scholarly works. It is not empirical data-based and does not imply any fieldwork, which can be a factor restricting the applicability of the findings to various organizational settings.

Such drawbacks are offset by the fact that the study possesses a good theoretical basis and that it uses strong scholarly sources, which gives it a good foundation to be used in future empirical studies. The gained insights may be used to guide future studies and provide useful advice to practitioners and policymakers willing to introduce legally compliant and managerially sound Green HRM strategies.

The study is important in a number of ways. It adds to the accumulation of literature that focuses on the importance of HRM in attaining environmental sustainability. The study concentrates on the legal and managerial dimensions of Green HRM, which makes it an interdisciplinary study that offers a special approach to the problem of interconnection between policy and practice (Lenka & Bhatia, 2025; Paužuolienė & Derkach, 2024). The research has practical implications for corporate leaders, HR managers, and policy-makers. It also points to the need to combine legal activities with strategic HR to enable organizations to adapt to environmental regulations and promote an active organizational culture of sustainability (Ray & Varlamov, 2025; Khan & Liu, 2023).

The study is in line with the worldwide sustainability initiatives, especially the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it proposes institutional solutions that facilitate environmental responsibility

among employees (Tahir et al., 2024; Htet et al., 2024). By this, the organization becomes a guide to other organizations that want to ensure that their HR strategies are based on global environmental goals. Lastly, the paper offers a conceptual framework that can guide further studies and can be a foundation of empirical studies on the effectiveness of integrated models of Green HRM. It provides the possibilities to analyze how legal and managerial instruments can be adjusted to address various organizational situations and thereby contribute to the growth of a more inclusive and sustainable corporate environment.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following research objectives:

- To analyze the existing legal frameworks and standards governing Green Human Resource Management in environmentally responsible enterprises.
- To examine the managerial strategies and practices that support the implementation of Green HRM.
- To develop an integrative framework that aligns legal compliance with managerial innovation to enhance environmental sustainability in organizations.

METHODOLOGY

In order to fully address the interplay between legal requirements and managerial practices within Green HRM, the research was undertaken as a well-structured research based on qualitative inquiry. The methodological framework was developed to investigate practices, perceptions, and organizational behaviors in different sectors in a context-specific way. The study was able to achieve this by combining various sources of data and by using stringent analysis methods to create deeper, more complex insights that transcend mere descriptions, and the result can be used not just in theoretical advancement but also in practice in sustainable human resource management.

Research Design

The research design was qualitative exploratory to explore the interaction between legal systems and managerial approaches in shaping the Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices in environmentally responsible businesses. Because of the complexity and interdisciplinary character of the issue, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate to provide the contextual, organizational behaviors, and interpretive meanings. The exploratory design enabled the emergent themes to be found without the strict theoretical restrictions. It was not a hypothesis-testing study; instead, it concentrated on learning how things are done in the real world and what problems occur. The methodology helped to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework through analysis of how the HR departments are balancing the environmental commitments with strategic managerial programs.

Data Collection Methods

The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysis of documents of the organization. The semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility in exploring the experience of the participants, yet allowed focusing on the essential issues of legal compliance in HR, the development of a green policy, the barriers to its implementation, and the role of managerial leadership in sustainability. There were 38 interviews of professionals who held strategic positions in the human resources, legal compliance, sustainability, and operations spheres. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with consent and took 40-60 minutes. Face-to-face interviews and interviews through virtual platforms were conducted depending on whether it was logistically possible and the preference of the participant. The internal documents, such as environmental HR policies, compliance manuals, sustainability reports, and employee training materials, were gathered in 15 enterprises. These sources complemented the information obtained during interviews, which allowed triangulation and the confirmation of the correspondence between the declared policies and the real practices.

Population and Sampling

The target population included environmentally responsible businesses in various industries that include manufacturing, logistics, tourism, construction, and IT. These organizations were selected based on public declarations of sustainability commitment, environmental certifications, and industry relevance. Using a purposive sampling technique, participants were chosen for their direct involvement in HRM or environmental compliance. The sample included HR directors, sustainability officers, legal counsels, and operational managers, individuals capable of providing in-depth perspectives on organizational strategies and legal obligations.

Participants were drawn from 15 organizations, and the final sample size of 38 was reached when thematic saturation occurred, that is, no new insights emerged from additional interviews. The diversity of roles and industries represented in the sample enriched the contextual breadth of the findings and supported a comprehensive analysis of the integration process.

Data Analysis Techniques

All interview transcripts and document contents were subjected to thematic analysis, following an inductive coding process. The data were coded manually, with themes allowed to emerge organically from repeated readings. Initial codes were grouped into broader categories such as *legal compliance*, *managerial engagement*, *green recruitment*, *employee training*, and *policy implementation barriers*. Cross-case comparisons were conducted to identify commonalities and differences across organizations and sectors. These comparisons revealed patterns in how enterprises adapted their HR strategies to align with environmental laws and internal sustainability objectives. Triangulation between interviews and documents enhanced the credibility and validity of the thematic findings. The analysis culminated in the development of a conceptual model illustrating the relationship between legal obligations, managerial decisions, and Green HRM practices. This model serves as a foundational framework for both academic exploration and organizational application.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly followed throughout the research. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, and informed consent was obtained before each interview. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by assigning coded identifiers to participants and enterprises. Data were stored securely, and access was restricted to the researcher. No personal or sensitive information was published. The research design posed minimal ethical risk, but all procedures were aligned with academic integrity, transparency, and respect for participant autonomy.

RESULTS

The results from 38 interviews and the analysis of internal organizational documents from 15 environmentally responsible enterprises are presented below. The findings are structured into five key domains: participant profile, emergent themes, sectoral breakdown, green HR practice implementation, and key barriers to legal-managerial integration. Each domain is supported by detailed in-chat tables for a comprehensive understanding.

Participant Profile

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of participants by job role, highlighting the range of expertise included in the study. The majority of participants were HR Directors (26.3%) and Sustainability Managers (21.0%), reflecting strong representation from strategic decision-makers involved in aligning HR practices with environmental goals. Legal Officers (18.4%) played a crucial role in explaining regulatory integration, while CSR Coordinators (18.4%) and Operations Managers (15.8%) offered insights into on-the-ground implementation. This composition ensured a comprehensive understanding of Green HRM from both compliance and operational perspectives, enabling the study to capture diverse organizational practices and interdepartmental interactions.

Table 1: *Participant Role Distribution*

Job Role	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
HR Director	10	26.3%
Sustainability Manager	8	21.0%
Legal Officer	7	18.4%
Operations Manager	6	15.8%
CSR Coordinator	7	18.4%

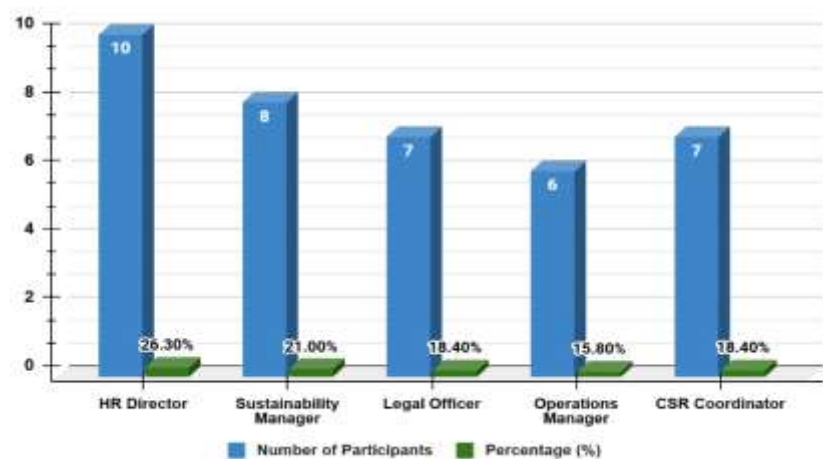


Figure 1: Participant Distribution by Job Role

Emergent Themes

Table 2 illustrates the key themes that emerged from the interview data, highlighting the core areas where legal and managerial frameworks intersect within Green HRM practices. Legal Compliance Integration was the most frequently mentioned theme (33 times), indicating that organizations actively incorporated environmental regulations into HR policies and procedures. Managerial Engagement was next, and it emphasized the role leadership plays in promoting or inhibiting sustainable practices. The topic of Green Recruitment & Training was much discussed, and it can be seen as evidence of the increasing attempts to combine talent strategies and environmental objectives. Employee Participation and Implementation Challenges also made an appearance, showing that the involvement of the workforce is not only important, but also that putting green initiatives into practice is not that simple.

Table 2: Key Themes Identified

Theme	Frequency (mentions)	Relative Importance (%)
Legal Compliance Integration	33	24%
Green Recruitment & Training	28	20%
Managerial Engagement	30	22%
Employee Participation	25	18%
Implementation Challenges	24	16%

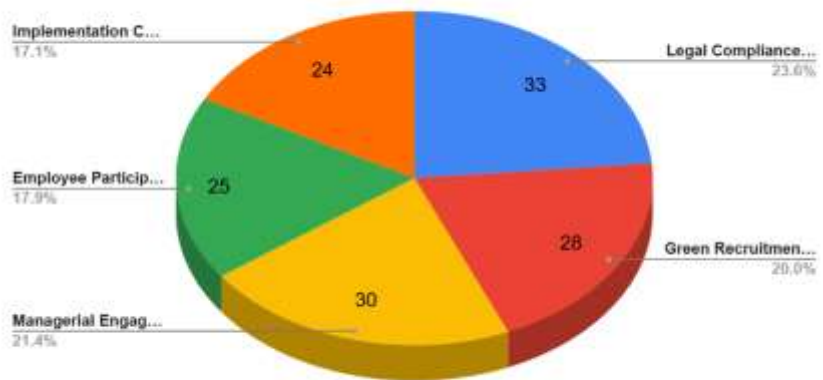


Figure 2: Distribution of Key Themes Identified from Interview Responses

Sectoral Distribution and Environmental Focus Areas

Table 3 describes the distribution of the sector of the participating enterprises and their related focus areas in Green HR. The manufacturing sector, with four enterprises, exhibited the highest regulatory exposure and emphasized compliance-driven job design and Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) audits. The construction sector similarly faced high regulatory scrutiny, focusing on sustainability certifications at project sites. Logistics enterprises prioritized green transport protocols and employee training, reflecting moderate regulatory engagement. The tourism sector adopted eco-awareness campaigns and employee recognition programs to foster sustainable behavior. Lastly, IT and services firms implemented virtual sustainability initiatives and remote work policies, reflecting a lower regulatory burden but increasing environmental awareness. These variations revealed how sectoral context shaped the strategic orientation of Green HRM implementation.

Table 3: Sectoral Representation and Key Environmental HR Focus Areas

Sector	No. of Enterprises	Green HR Focus Area	Regulatory Exposure	Workforce Size Range
Manufacturing	4	Compliance-driven job design, EHS audits	High	200–800
Logistics	3	Green transport protocols, training	Moderate	150–600
Tourism	3	Eco-awareness programs, awards	Moderate	100–400
Construction	2	Site-based sustainability certifications	High	300–750
IT & Services	3	Virtual sustainability, remote policies	Low	100–500

Adoption of Green HR Practices

Table 4 illustrates the extent to which various Green HR practices have been adopted across the participating organizations. Sustainability Training (13 organizations) and Eco-friendly Workplace Policies (12 organizations) were the most widely implemented, indicating that companies prioritized employee awareness and environmentally responsible infrastructure as foundational steps. Green Job Descriptions (11 organizations) were also common, reflecting efforts to align roles with sustainability goals. Employee Environmental Awards (8 organizations) and Green Performance Appraisal (10 organizations) were adopted less frequently. This suggested that while structural and educational initiatives were well established, performance-based incentives for sustainability remained underutilized and required further emphasis.

Table 4: Adoption of Green HR Practices

Practice	Number of Organizations Using Practice
Green Job Descriptions	11
Sustainability Training	13
Eco-friendly Workplace Policies	12
Employee Environmental Awards	8
Green Performance Appraisal	10

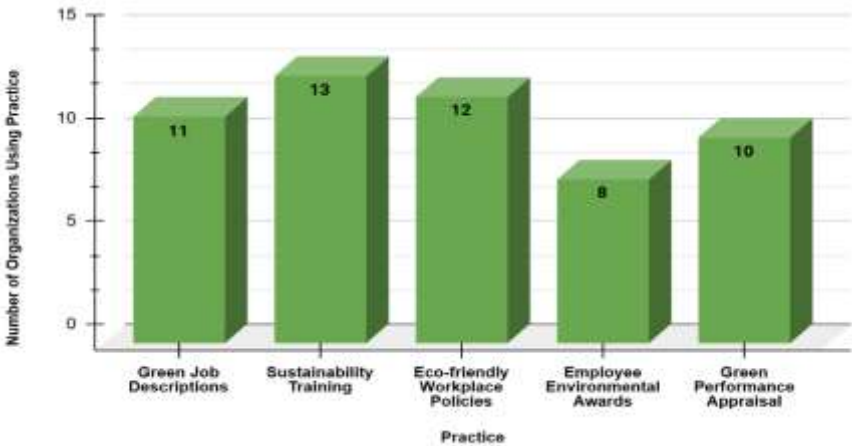


Figure 3: Adoption of Green HR Practices Across Participating Organizations

Barriers to Legal-Managerial Integration

Table 5 outlined the primary barriers that hindered the effective integration of legal and managerial frameworks in Green HRM. Lack of Legal Clarity emerged as the most frequently reported obstacle (10 instances), especially in interpreting and operationalizing environmental mandates within HR policies. Budget Constraints (9) and Limited Expertise (8) were commonly cited, reflecting financial and skill-related limitations, particularly in small to mid-sized enterprises. Resistance to Change (6) highlighted internal hesitancy, often at the managerial level, while Weak Monitoring Systems (5) indicated a lack of mechanisms to track and evaluate green HR outcomes. These challenges collectively impeded consistent and effective implementation.

Table 5: *Barriers to Integration*

Barrier	Frequency Reported
Lack of Legal Clarity	10
Budget Constraints	9
Limited Expertise	8
Resistance to Change	6
Weak Monitoring	5

DISCUSSION

Results of the research offer valuable information on the way environmentally responsible businesses combine legal and managerial models in Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM). An important point is the increasing strategic value of the integration of legal compliance into HR policies. The fact that this theme is prominent among the participants affirms the observation that organizations are becoming more conscious of the need to conform to environmental regulations. Nonetheless, the qualitative evidence also indicates that such integration is frequently lopsided, industry-specific, and hampered by internal constraints (including budgets and legal ambiguity). Managerial involvement became a significant driver of the effective implementation of Green HRM. Companies with active leadership were more likely to implement an extensive range of green practices, including sustainability-related performance appraisal and green job descriptions. This is in line with the argument that leadership plays an important role in the process of sustainable change brought about by human capital (Shahzad et al., 2025). Green recruitment and training have also been found as institutionalized elements of the study, especially in manufacturing and logistics industries that leave a physical trace in the environment.

Although activities like sustainability training and policy execution were prevalent, incentive-based schemes like environmental awards and performance-based sustainability KPIs were not very well developed. This difference means that compliance and awareness are well established, but that some of the more cultural and behavioral changes have not yet reached maturity in organizational structures, rewarding green behaviors. The most cited obstacles, legal ambiguity, scarce financial and human capital, and resistance to change, point to the practical difficulties of putting sustainability into operation in HRM. Such barriers are uniform across sectors, but their strength depends on the size of an enterprise, the regulatory pressure in the sector, and the commitment of the enterprise leadership.

The results are consistent and complementary to those of other existing literature on Green HRM. In their study, Pham et al. (2020) and Ren et al. (2018) highlighted that Green HRM is impossible to introduce without the background of institutional and legal frameworks. The study participants shared that same belief and showed that legal compliance frequently establishes the basis on which HR strategies are built. According to Xie and Lau (2023), the incorporation of green practices in HRM through evidence-based practice requires leadership of managers to facilitate a long-term culture of sustainability. This is what we found in our results: the enterprises with good leadership were in a better position to institutionalize green job descriptions, sustainability training, and eco-policy implementation.

The two studies by Shahzad et al. (2025) and Shaikh et al. (2024) focused on the mediating effect of employee behavior and green innovation on the realization of sustainable organizational results. As our research establishes, employee engagement is not yet at an optimum level across the board, as it is becoming widely known. The low utilization of reward systems and uneven performance appraisals in terms of the environmental contributions indicate that this dimension of behavior is not fully utilized. Freiha et al. (2024) paid attention

to the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks as a means of facilitating sustainable development, especially in situations when the policy frameworks are changing. Our respondents also indicated that they had trouble going beyond general regulatory requirements and developing HR policies to implement them. This is reminiscent of the claim by Zhang and Han (2025), who claimed that they should change compliance mechanisms in response to the evolving legal paradigms, like carbon neutrality goals.

Lastly, Lenka and Bhatia (2025) theorized that Green HRM is not only a tool of compliance but a resilience strategy to long-term competitiveness. This was highly backed by some of our participants who not only considered environmental HR practices as a duty but rather an opportunity to build a reputation and be innovative in the organization.

The research of the study is significant both theoretically and practically. In concept, it also adds to the small volume of literature that has been written on the legal-managerial interface of Green HRM. By highlighting how regulatory pressures interact with internal managerial strategies, the research extends the understanding of institutional drivers of sustainable HR development. Practically, the study provides actionable insights for HR professionals, sustainability officers, and legal advisors. First, organizations should prioritize cross-functional collaboration between HR and legal departments to clarify the interpretation of environmental laws and policies. As Zaman and Sedera (2016) emphasized, administrative innovation must be underpinned by systemic understanding across departments to ensure successful implementation.

Second, management training should emphasize the value of integrating environmental KPIs into HR scorecards and appraisal systems. The underutilization of such metrics, as noted in our results, signals a missed opportunity to embed sustainability into employee performance culture. Third, policy-makers and regulatory bodies need to provide clearer guidelines that translate environmental obligations into actionable workplace protocols. As Faeni et al. (2025) indicated, especially in emerging economies, clarity and accessibility of environmental governance frameworks can significantly accelerate compliance and innovation in HR.

While the findings provide valuable contributions, the study is not without limitations. First, it is limited to 15 enterprises and 38 participants, which, while sufficient for qualitative saturation, may not capture the full diversity of practices globally. Second, the research focused on enterprises already recognized for environmental responsibility; thus, it may underrepresent the challenges faced by less mature organizations. Third, the study was constrained to sectors with medium to high environmental exposure. Sectors like finance or retail, which are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious but were not represented here, may exhibit different dynamics. Finally, while document analysis enhanced triangulation, the absence of longitudinal observation means implementation trends over time could not be assessed.

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the scope to include a larger and more diverse sample across additional sectors and regions. A longitudinal case study may provide a possibility to examine how Green HRM changes in unison with regulatory changes and internal organizational changes. It would be possible to test the relationships between legal compliance, managerial engagement, employee behavior, and sustainability performance suggested by Shahzad et al. (2025) and Awwad Al-Shammari et al. (2022) using quantitative studies with structural equation modeling (SEM) or mediation analysis. The further examination of the impacts of Green HRM at the employee level is the field that could be explored more deeply, including job satisfaction, green commitment, and turnover intentions, which are addressed in the emerging literature (Obeng et al., 2024; Khan & Liu, 2023). In the future, the researchers could examine the intersections between artificial intelligence, digital HR systems, big data analytics, and Green HRM strategies in order to facilitate more effective environmental monitoring and compliance (Shaikh et al., 2024; Ejibe et al., 2024).

Finally, it would be very useful to come up with context-specific models that can help enterprises in interpreting and applying the national environmental policies using the HR functions. This involves the development of modular policy templates, training modules, and performance measurements that can be customized, industry to industry and legal jurisdiction to legal jurisdiction.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the overlap between regulatory requirements and operational approaches in the formulation and practice of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) in responsible environment businesses. It was found that although the majority of organizations have started to incorporate environmental compliance into HR practices, the intensity and success of such practices differ greatly across industries and organizational design. Integration of legal compliance, managerial involvement, and green recruitment and

training was the prevailing trend. The areas still lacking include performance-based environmental incentives, employee recognition systems, and application of sustainability metrics. There are two implications. As a practice, the study highlights the importance of the organization developing formal, interdepartmental partnerships between HR and legal departments to guarantee consistency in the translation of policies. There should be a greater leadership commitment to propel Green HRM beyond compliance to cultural transformation. Concerning theory, the study adds to the existing body of knowledge with the suggestion of a more comprehensive understanding of the co-construction of sustainability endeavors through external legal systems and internal management regimes. In line with the findings, it is recommended that organizations should invest in environmental legal education for HR, incorporate green KPIs in the appraisal system, and design incentive systems that reward sustainable behaviour. Governing bodies should also provide clear regulatory guidelines and templates of policies that facilitate implementation in various industries. Future research should expand across diverse regions and sectors, employ mixed methods to validate theoretical models, and investigate the role of digital technologies in optimizing Green HRM. Longitudinal studies can further illuminate the evolution and long-term effectiveness of these practices as environmental regulations and expectations continue to evolve.

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